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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 002055

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/UBI, EUR/RPM AND PMAT

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TAGS: MOPS PREL I2 NL

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/IRAQ: SECOND DUTCH FATALITY

REF: THE HAGUE 1164

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY CDA DANIEL R. RUSSEL FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AN
D D)

11. (U) A Royal Dutch Military Police (Koninklijke Marechaussee) Sergeant was killed in an ambush on a Dutch military vehicle on August 14 south of Rumaythah in Al Muthanna province. The 29 year-old Sergeant, Jeroen Severs, was riding in an unarmored jeep which came under heavy fire from small arms and possibly a machine gun. Four Dutch Army and one Royal Marechaussee personnel were wounded in the incident. The five are being treated in the Dutch military hospital in As Samawah, and all are expected to recover from their injuries. The personnel were returning to the Dutch headquarters Camp Smitty in As Samawah after investigating a previous disturbance. Dutch Quick Reaction Force assets and Dutch air force Apache helicopters from Talil AB were dispatched to the scene to assist as was a U.S. Blackhawk medevac helicopter. (Note: the Netherlands has some 1400 personnel serving in AlMuthanna province as part of the UK Multinational Division SE. This deployment is set to run through March 2005 to cover anticipated elections. End note.) Two Iraqi militants were allegedly killed in the incident.

12. (C) Charge conveyed USG condolences to PM Balkenende and FM Bot at a WWII commemoration on August 15. Both seemed fatalistic about the episode and expressed satisfaction with the response coordination between Dutch and U.S. forces. Balkenende made a strong public strong statement on August 15 saying that the Netherlands would hold firm in Iraq. He said "this was not an attack by the Iraqi people but by individuals who are trying to sabotage the rebuilding of Iraq by their destructive actions." He subsequently said on August 16, "in the face of terror we will not and we shall not budge." CDA also spoke at same commemoration with Dutch CHOD Lt. Gen. Berlijn. Berlijn expressed appreciation for U.S. medevac support. He said that some early rumblings in the Dutch media about the Dutch deployment had been effectively quashed by strong statements from the junior governing coalition partner the Liberal Democrats (D66) to the effect that "these things happen" and that the Dutch should "stay the course."

13. (C) Comment: Reaction to this event in the Netherlands has been muted. Media attention has focused on the Dutch military union questioning the advisability of Dutch forces conducting patrols in unarmored vehicles. (The Dutch have taken certain measures including traveling in open all terrain vehicles and eschewing helmets in an attempt to better ingratiate themselves with Iraqis and avoid perceptions that they are an occupying force.) MFA and MOD colleagues have also reacted to this event calmly. Dutch Army Plans and Policy Chief MG van den Broek told DATT that the incident, while regrettable, was not unexpected, and modest compared with the scale of U.S. sacrifices in Iraq. Post does not believe that this second Dutch fatality will lead to any significant calls for a premature withdrawal of Dutch forces in Iraq. End Comment.

MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

RUSSEL